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LEARNING LEADERS

A Strategy For Teacher
Professional Learning

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Ministerial Foreword

My school improvement policy *Every School a Good School* puts the needs and aspirations of children and young people at the heart of schools. My priority is to raise educational standards for all and close the achievement gap. We know that the quality of teaching significantly affects pupil outcomes. We therefore need to support our teachers to deal with the many complex issues they face in the classroom. I believe this Strategy marks an important stage in shaping the future of teacher professional learning.

The review of teacher education has been ongoing and has had considerable input from those who, like me, take a close interest in the educational outcomes of all our young people. I am grateful for that input.

This Strategy will build on the good work already taking place in our classrooms and further improve the quality of teaching and leadership in our schools, giving every pupil access to high quality teaching every day.

I am pleased to be able to say that our education system is meeting the needs of most of our young people. However, I believe we can do more. I know our teachers are dedicated professionals who want to achieve the best outcomes for all of their pupils. I want to thank the many teachers who already take ownership of their own professional learning which, in turn, benefits their pupils. I urge them to continue to expand and develop their professional knowledge.

Looking to the future, I want to see change in three key areas:

- the development of an agreed Teacher Professional Learning Framework based on revised teaching and leadership competences and linked to improved outcomes for pupils;
- using everything that is good in our current system to encourage and promote collaboration and sharing of best practice through professional learning communities; and
- strengthening leadership capacity in our schools.

This will be a challenge in the current financial climate, but we will work with our education stakeholders to build and develop the required support at a pace that matches available resources. This Strategy provides an opportunity to refresh our thinking and build towards a vision for teacher professional learning beyond 2020.

I look forward to continuing to work with our stakeholders to develop the policies and systems that will take us closer to providing a world-class education service for all of our young people.

John O'Dowd, MLA
Minister for Education

Executive Summary

- 1 Every School a Good School (2009), the Department of Education's school improvement policy, recognises the centrality of high quality leadership and teaching to raising educational standards. It follows therefore that teachers need high quality professional learning opportunities, if they are to meet the complex and developing needs of pupils in a rapidly changing world.
- 2 Research and inspection evidence confirms that we have dedicated teachers and excellent leaders in our schools. The evidence also demonstrates that there is increasingly effective work in teacher professional learning.
- 3 In developing 'Learning Leaders', the Department has engaged with educational stakeholders to build consensus around a vision for teacher professional learning.
- 4 In developing the vision the stakeholder group focused on three key questions namely:
 - I. What approaches to professional learning would ensure that every child is taught by outstanding teachers every day?
 - II. How do we maximise our resources and interventions to define, promote and agree an approach to professional learning that the profession will support?
 - III. How can we collaborate more effectively to support and embed a self-regenerative teaching workforce that can continually redefine its practice within changing local, regional and global contexts?
- 5 The resulting vision is:
"Every teacher is a learning leader, accomplished in working collaboratively with all partners in the interests of children and young people."
- 6 The overall aim is: to empower the teaching profession to strengthen its professionalism and expertise to meet the challenging educational needs of young people in the 21st century.
- 7 The supporting objectives are: to provide a structured framework for teacher professional learning; develop the leadership capacity of teachers; and provide practice-led support within communities of effective practice. These objectives are underpinned by agreed characteristics of effective provision.
- 8 The Strategy focuses on five key areas:
 - I. Teacher Professional Learning Framework – empowering teachers to build on their strengths and access additional support, through combinations of learning approaches geared towards personal learning and career preferences and reflecting the needs of their pupils.
 - II. Development and Dissemination of Good Practice – supporting the identification and harnessing of innovative practice in professional learning already in the system in order to effect improvement and develop 'next' practice.
 - III. Building Professional Learning Communities – supporting closer collaboration between practitioners, schools and school clusters and professional learning providers.

- IV. Building Leadership Capacity –** strengthening the current support and professional learning for school leaders.
- V. Engagement –** engaging with practitioners and other stakeholders across the system on the actions arising out of this Strategy.

- 9** These five areas are supported by **fifteen policy commitments** focused on collaborative working by all stakeholders.
- 10** International best practice confirms that policies are more likely to be successful if they are research-informed, coherent and sustained over a significant period of time. The Strategy is based on three clearly defined but interdependent phases of development.

Phase One: Defining and Developing – focuses on building capacity through collaborative practice;

Phase Two: Expanding – focuses on creating coherence; and

Phase Three: Embedding – focuses on supporting a self-sustaining system of professional learning.

- 11** In moving towards a self-sustaining system of professional learning, the teaching profession will set the standards to which it will hold itself accountable.
- 12** The Strategy seeks to address the recommendations of the OECD Report ‘Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Northern Ireland, United Kingdom’ (2013) by building coherence across the various stages of teacher professional learning, creating continuity, consistency and consolidation of approach.
- 13** The publication of ‘**Learning Leaders**’ marks the starting point of a managed implementation process. An Action Plan for the first year is published alongside this Strategy. Further Action Plans will be published annually.

Section 1

Introduction

The importance of teachers

1.1 The pace at which the world is changing challenges children and young people to develop increasingly complex knowledge and skills. It is difficult to imagine the world sixty years from now, when the children starting school today will be approaching retirement. Teachers too face a world which can be simultaneously creative, complex and challenging. Nevertheless, it is accepted globally that ‘the quality of teaching is the most crucial “in-school” factor in raising the level of pupils’ achievement and furthering their educational progress’.¹ Essentially, a school is only as good or as great as its teachers.

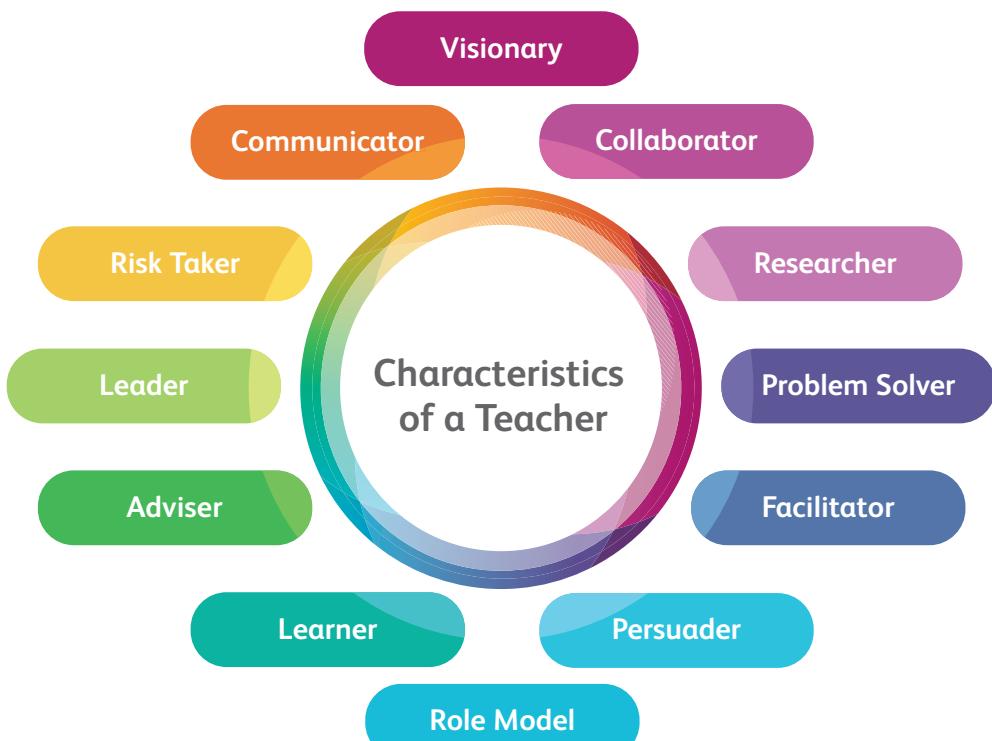
1.2 Inspection evidence, supported by OECD evaluation, shows that teachers here do excellent work. It also shows that they are being supported by increasingly effective work in teacher professional learning particularly where the emphasis has shifted towards more customised school-based training.

Rationale

1.3 Over the past decade there has been a radical shift in understanding about what constitutes effective professional learning for teachers, where it should take place, what it should involve and how to provide it. It is timely therefore to review teacher professional learning and use the knowledge



Figure 1 Characteristics of a Teacher



gained to envisage what teacher professional learning should look like if it is to continue to support teachers to meet the needs of future generations of learners.

- 1.4** We will build towards that future by ensuring that a coherent system of career-long teacher professional learning is developed to support teachers to lead both self and school improvement. This Strategy represents an important first step in creating the associated support networks.

1.5 We have engaged with a range of key stakeholders to develop a vision for teacher professional learning over the next ten years. The key questions we considered collectively are outlined below:

- I. What approaches to professional learning would ensure that every child is taught by outstanding teachers every day?
- II. How do we maximise our resources and interventions to define, promote and agree an approach to professional learning that the profession will support?
- III. How can we collaborate more effectively to support and embed a self-regenerative teaching workforce that can continually redefine its practice within changing local, regional and global contexts?

¹ Aspiring to Excellence – Final Report of the International Review Panel on the Structure of Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland, June 2014

1.6 The stakeholder group also agreed that in order to make swifter progress, the following would not form part of the Strategy:

- links with teachers' terms and conditions;
- links with career progression; and
- the professional learning of the wider education workforce.

1.7 Our stakeholder engagement identified the main characteristics a teacher needs. These are summarised in **Figure 1** on the previous page.

1.8 Our engagement with key stakeholders identified too, gaps in the current system and desirable changes for the future. These are summarised in **Figure 2** below.

1.9 International research tells us that policies are more likely to succeed if they are coherent, sustained and informed by research over time. Our strategic approach will build towards a sustainable system of, and framework for, teacher professional learning that celebrates and builds on existing good practice as a way to identify what has been termed 'next' practice.

Figure 2 Issues to be addressed



1.10 Working with our stakeholders we identified those key elements of teacher professional learning that can build a successful education system. The combined key elements can provide a coherent career-long Framework for teacher professional learning. The Framework will be comprised of:

- clear pathways for progression in professional learning that will help teachers to identify and celebrate success;
- access to appropriate support and development at all stages of teachers' careers;
- tools to help teachers, as professionals and reflective practitioners, to determine their continuing learning needs;
- planned opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively to share best practice through learning networks; and
- opportunities for nurturing and building leadership capacity at all levels, starting at initial teacher education.

1.11 Each element of the Framework will be informed by collaborative practice at every level, supported by pathfinder programmes that have continuous improvement and action research at their core. The Framework will also be responsive to changing contexts and educational policy. Teacher competences linked to all stages of a teacher's career will underpin it.

Engagement with teachers and stakeholders

1.12 We know that effective policies are best developed by collaborative working at each stage so they are precise and practical and can be implemented in manageable and motivating ways. This Strategy is the starting point of a managed implementation process.



Section 2

Vision and Characteristics of Professional Learning

Vision

- 2.1** Analysis of the current context of teacher professional learning shows that we have much to celebrate and to develop in the best interests of children and young people.
- 2.2** Our strategic vision for teacher professional learning is:

Every teacher is a learning leader, accomplished in working collaboratively with all partners in the interests of children and young people.

Our aim is:

to empower the teaching profession to strengthen its professionalism and expertise to meet the challenging educational needs of young people in the 21st century.

Our objectives are:

to provide a structured framework for teacher professional learning; develop the leadership capacity of teachers; and provide practice-led support within communities of effective practice.





Teacher professional learning – characteristics

2.3 Underpinning this vision, we have identified a number of characteristics of good provision, some applicable to all programmes and others more likely to be achieved in system wide programmes.

All teacher professional learning programmes should:

- be clearly aligned with the Department's strategic goals and flexible enough to accommodate changes in policy and practice;
- build on and develop the skills articulated in our curriculum in an explicit way;
- model effective practice in individualised learning so that teachers can do the same;
- reflect agreed teacher competences;
- ensure that leadership skills are integral at each stage of learning;
- develop partnership approaches to course design and delivery;
- be based on appropriate classroom and other research and have reflective practice at their core;
- be practice-led but with appropriate support; and
- include optional accreditation where possible.

System wide teacher professional learning programmes should:

- contribute to developing a framework of professional learning;
- promote the expanded role of teacher tutor or CPD leader;
- develop collaboration and share best practice with stakeholders to build capacity;
- ensure that evaluation skills, including lesson observation, are integral to each stage of developing 'next' practice;
- have agreed weightings between academic achievement and practical skills or competences; and
- match skills or competences to other professions to provide a choice of career pathways.

2.4 We want to empower the teaching profession to strengthen its professionalism and expertise by building on the vision and characteristics set out above and working collaboratively with teachers and education stakeholders. Teachers will be supported in taking more autonomy over their own professional learning to enable them to continue to be reflective in their practice and contribute to improvement in educational outcomes.

Section 3

Policy Commitments

- 3.1** We have established five key areas to be addressed to ensure that every pupil has access to high quality teaching every day. These are underpinned by fifteen policy commitments. The key areas and policy commitments are set out in *Figure 3* and the tables below:

Figure 3 **Key Areas**





Policy Commitments

Key area: **Teacher Professional Learning Framework**

Empowering teachers to build on their strengths and access additional support, through combinations of learning approaches geared towards personal learning and career preferences and reflecting the needs of their pupils.

Policy commitment 1

Teachers will have access to a coherent and career-long professional learning framework underpinned by revised teacher competences and built on established best practice and collaboration at all stages.

Policy commitment 2

The Department will review current arrangements, which provide up to five additional staff development days² to ensure they support Boards of Governors and Senior Leadership Teams to deliver professional learning approaches that align with the Strategy's vision and characteristics.

Policy commitment 3

Teachers will have the opportunity to access support from a mentor or coach to identify areas for improvement and their individual learning needs. This will inform the development of their tailored professional learning plans.

Key area: **Development and Dissemination of Good Practice**

Supporting the identification and harnessing of innovative practice in professional learning already in the system in order to effect improvement and develop 'next' practice.

Policy commitment 4

Learning drawn from research and ETI evaluations will inform the development of 'next' practice pathfinder projects at all levels of professional learning.

Policy commitment 5

Teachers will have access to a virtual centre of excellence. Best practice examples and useful resources will be developed based on consultation with practitioners and mapped to the Department's vision and characteristics. This will build on and expand work already carried out by EA, HEIs, CCEA and others.

Policy commitment 6

Teachers at all stages of their careers will have opportunities to develop their skills in action research, through closer partnership arrangements between schools and the EA, HEIs and GTCNI.

² <https://www.deni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/circular-2011-21-school-development-days-2011-12-to-2014-15-english-version.pdf>

**Key area:
Building Professional
Learning Communities**

Supporting closer collaboration between practitioners, schools and school clusters and professional learning providers.

Policy commitment 7

Support will be provided for the ongoing development and sustainability of professional learning communities and/or self-directed learning networks where schools or groups of teachers can demonstrate the capacity to deliver clear educational benefits.

Policy commitment 8

Where teachers and/or schools demonstrate the capacity to do so they will be encouraged and empowered to lead their own and/or other schools' professional learning. Achievement will be measured through the inspection process.

Policy commitment 9

Teacher tutors in schools and university tutors will have opportunities to work alongside each other. This will enable them to support and assess the progress of student teachers in ITE and beginning teachers during induction and EPD.

**Key area:
Building Leadership Capacity**

Strengthening the current support and professional learning for school leaders.

Policy commitment 10

Leadership skills will form an integral part of all competence development from ITE and throughout a teacher's career. Support and professional learning for school leaders will be strengthened by developing a pathway to leadership, underpinned by new leadership competences.

Policy commitment 11

School leaders will have opportunities to access extended professional learning – this may take the form of additional study or placements in other organisations including within and beyond the education sector.

Policy commitment 12

Where there is evidence of underachievement in a school, the EA will provide support in strategic leadership, leading change, and coaching to assist in improving pupil outcomes.

Key area: **Engagement**

Engaging with practitioners and other stakeholders across the system on the actions arising out of this Strategy.

Policy commitment 13

Teachers and school leaders will have the opportunity to contribute to designing, developing and evaluating all funded programmes related to the Strategy. Providers of professional learning programmes will establish focus and/or advisory groups to demonstrate how programmes can improve standards.

Policy commitment 14

The Department will engage with the teaching profession on the most effective ways to maximise the use of technology to design and deliver professional learning for the 21st century.

Policy commitment 15

The Department will use teacher and stakeholder input to review the Strategy and modify and/or adapt planned actions on an ongoing basis.

3.2 These policy commitments will set the direction for a number of actions that will support the delivery of this Strategy.



Section 4

Actions

Key Area: Teacher Professional Learning Framework

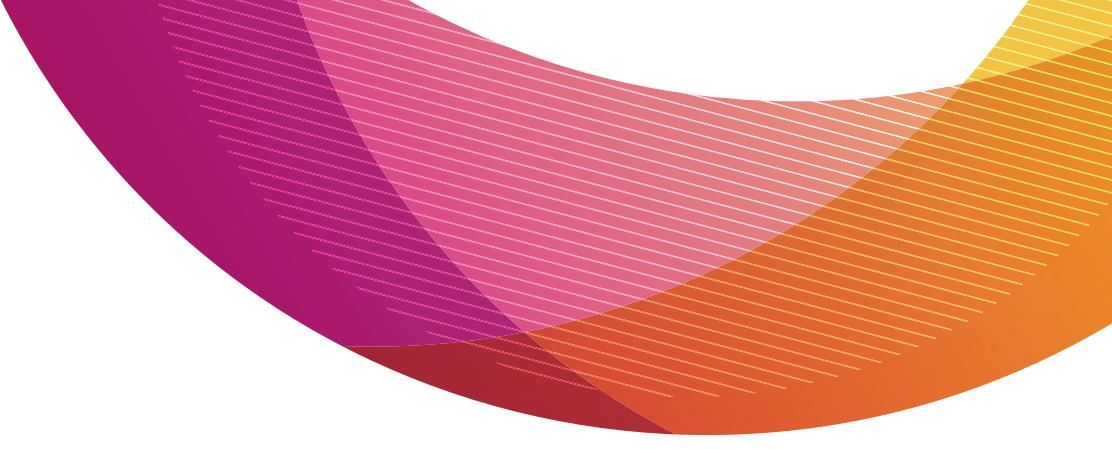
4.1 The Framework will combine the elements of the current stages of initial, induction and CPD into a coherent streamlined process, where inter-dependencies are made explicit. The foundation for coherence will be closer collaboration between practitioners, schools and school clusters and support providers. This will enable teachers to take a more structured and informed approach to career-long professional learning and to identify the most appropriate learning pathway in line with the recommendations from the OECD 2013 Report.³

4.2 The aspiration articulated by the stakeholder development group in agreeing on an overarching Framework is to provide:

- teachers with support in the early part of their careers to develop their expertise;
- teachers with access to ongoing professional learning opportunities and pathways that inspire, motivate and recognise commitment to developing professional proficiency;
- teachers, as leaders of learning, with opportunities to develop specialist knowledge and skills in specific areas together with coaching and mentoring skills to enable them to share outstanding practice with others;

³ OECD (2013) 'Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Northern Ireland, United Kingdom'



- 
- school leaders with ongoing access to a mix of experiential, vocational and academic professional learning to enable them to lead and inspire their teachers, pupils and parents;
 - professional learning communities within and across schools with access to a range of guidance and quality-assured support to enable them to drive continuing professional learning; and
 - teachers with a tool to guide, motivate, recognise and share outstanding practice.
- 4.3** The 2013 OECD Report referenced the GTCNI's proposed revision of teacher competences. As part of the development of the Framework the GTCNI will work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop and consult on revised teacher competences aimed at making them more practical for users.
- 4.4** Supporting elements of the developing Framework will include:
- engaging and involving practitioners in design, implementation and evaluation of all associated work;
 - identifying and consolidating best practice leading to 'next' practice led by the ETI;
 - developing and integrating the competence continuum into all phases, including leadership led by the GTCNI;
 - integration across all phases of professional learning, including leadership, led by statutory agencies; and
 - underpinning research and action research led by the HEIs.
- 4.5** The Framework will include indicators to help identify, nurture and develop leadership skills, knowledge and attributes from ITE onwards.
- 4.6** The Framework will enable teachers to build on their strengths and access additional support by combining learning approaches geared towards personal learning preferences and reflecting the needs of their pupils. It will provide options for accredited and non-accredited professional learning that allow teachers to make choices about developing their specialist skills and knowledge linked to the revised teacher competences. The Department will commission the GTCNI, EA, and the HEIs to consult on practical ways for teachers to record evidence of professional learning they undertake and its impact on self and school improvement.
- Key Area: Development and Dissemination of Good Practice**
- 4.7** The stakeholder group identified gaps in current provision. The ETI will identify effective practice and make recommendations about how this can be used more widely. This will also capture best practice in other jurisdictions, including international trends and innovations.
- 4.8** As resources allow, the Department will commission the EA and HEIs to design and deliver pathfinder projects to build 'next' practice. These may look at issues such as:
- coaching and mentoring;
 - the role of the teacher tutor;
 - partnership arrangements;
 - peer learning and support; and
 - leading and managing school improvement in challenging circumstances.

- 4.9** Pathfinder projects will be subject to rigorous evaluation to identify lessons learned before being considered for wider implementation. This will be managed in conjunction with stakeholders to ensure it embeds successfully with existing practice.

Key Area: Building Professional Learning Communities

- 4.10** Partnerships will be a key element in developing the Framework. The Department already endorses the development of professional learning communities and teacher networks between and across schools. Successful networks and communities have shared goals based on collective enquiry with a focus on results and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- 4.11** Reviewing and updating formal partnership arrangements between schools and HEIs can provide mutual benefits too for partners. These arrangements will enable schools to access the curricular and research expertise of a university to enhance the effectiveness of the educational experience they offer. Universities, through placement opportunities, will be able to draw on the experience of practising teachers to both support and challenge their programmes of learning.

Key Area: Building Leadership Capacity

- 4.12** Leadership is second only to teaching as the factor most likely to influence outcomes for pupils. Our current leadership development has much that is good and it continues to be delivered in challenging financial circumstances. The EA already identifies and matches experienced mentors to support newly appointed principals. Access to middle leadership training and the Professional Qualification for Headship programme strengthen aspiring Principals' leadership skills and build capacity.
- 4.13** Research here and across the world points to the need to review the professional learning arrangements of school leaders to address the challenges of attracting, developing and sustaining leaders for our schools.⁴
- 4.14** There is a clear link between effective leadership, which focuses relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching, leading to better learning and higher achievement for all learners.⁵ Increasing the capacity of leadership across all phases of education can lead to improving standards particularly in the contexts that need it most.⁶

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) "School Leadership Project" Northern Ireland "School Leadership Matters" report (commissioned by RTU and LDS and produced by PwC)

⁵ The Chief Inspector's Report 2012–14

⁶ Education Committee's 'Inquiry into Successful Post-Primary Schools Serving Disadvantaged Communities' and 'Educational disadvantage and the Protestant working class – A Call to Action' (Working Group on Educational disadvantage and the Protestant working class – 2011)

⁷ www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-post-primary/surveys-evaluations-post-primary-2013/preparing-school-principals-to-be-effective-leaders.htm



4.15 Leadership will be an integral part of the Framework. The Department will expect the EA to commission, in consultation with key stakeholders, alternative models for leadership professional learning aimed at building leadership capacity at all levels. This will ensure that leaders' capabilities are reviewed and further learning opportunities identified, particularly for those leaders working in more challenging circumstances.

4.16 In particular, the Department will require the EA to strengthen support and professional learning for school leaders by developing a pathway to leadership, underpinned by revised leadership competences. The pathway will make best use of resources to:

- build leadership capabilities which reflect the recommendations from the ETI Report "Preparing School Principals to be Effective Leaders"⁷ and are based on the nine key principles identified by the ETI;
- encompass the different leadership roles in schools from leader in the classroom through to middle and senior leadership;
- support leaders to take responsibility for and build staff capacity to impact positively on children and young people's learning; and
- include ways for experienced school leaders to continue to develop and refresh their skills and competences across the wider education sector and, where appropriate, beyond.

Supporting Elements

4.17 The Department will commission the EA and CCEA to examine more flexible arrangements for delivering courses to suit each individual teacher's needs. This should include greater use of online resources and the creation of learning hubs, teaching schools, twilight and distance learning provision, as resources allow.

4.18 While the emphasis of the Framework will be on individual teacher professional learning, it will also be in the context of school and system professional learning needs, recognising the interaction and interdependencies of all three. One of the actions arising from the Strategy will be to examine in more detail why good policies, programmes, theories and approaches have not been realised in practice or have not had the intended impact.

Key Area: Engagement

- 4.19** The Department recognises the benefit of providing expert stakeholders with opportunities to implement and evaluate this work. Cutting across all areas of work will be an ongoing commitment to stakeholder engagement around the actions arising out of this Strategy designed to ensure maximum input from across the education system.
- 4.20** The Department recognises the importance of providing teachers and school leaders with the opportunity to contribute to the design development and evaluation of professional learning programmes. For their part, providers of professional learning programmes will establish advisory groups of practitioners to support them in evaluating how their programmes impact on improving standards.
- 4.21** The Department will commission the development of a virtual Centre of Excellence. This will give teachers and school leaders advice, resources and professional learning opportunities that ensure a new approach to delivering a modern, skills-focused, 21st century curriculum. It will build on existing work to provide a single portal to give teachers access to research, guidance and support materials, examples of different methodologies and best practice case studies with links to resources in other countries.

4.22 The Department will establish a small expert group of educators from other jurisdictions to provide a robust and cost effective quality assurance and challenge function at key stages in the development and implementation of actions arising from the Strategy.

4.23 As part of its continuing commitment to engagement, the Department will seek input from teachers and wider stakeholders in reviewing this Strategy. Feedback will be used to modify and, where appropriate, adapt key actions on an ongoing basis.

Outcomes

4.24 The Strategy, and the actions underpinning it, will empower teachers, student teachers and school leaders to effect improved pupil outcomes. The pace of change will match available resources.

The following sections outline the responsibilities placed on teachers and providers and the opportunities available to them to realise those outcomes.



As a teacher ...

I will have the opportunity to:

- access structured information on the range of external professional learning courses open to me in any academic year enabling me to reflect on, plan and manage my own professional learning;
- access coaching and mentoring support based on my needs;
- know that any system-wide professional learning I undertake will be subject to rigorous quality assurance;
- know that practising teachers will support system-wide training and be trained in or have piloted the proposed new approaches;
- choose different approaches to accreditation, according to my learning needs;
- self-direct my professional learning, including working with online communities;
- contribute to professional discussions with colleagues in a range of forums to evaluate professional learning and to improve professional knowledge and practice; and
- use a range of methods for my professional learning.

I have a responsibility to:

- have knowledge of the teacher competences;
- agree with my line manager the time required to learn and effectively implement new skills that increase my competence and confidence;
- ensure that an integral part of any professional learning I undertake will focus on the implications for providing progressive learning opportunities for my pupils;
- support colleagues to identify and achieve personal learning goals;
- demonstrate that my professional learning has improved my practice and the standards achieved by my pupils; and
- choose professional learning activities that focus on providing improved outcomes for my pupils.

As a student/beginning teacher ...

I will have the opportunity to:

- know that my course content and delivery will reflect the high standards expected of me as a teacher;
- access a range of skills and experience from tutors and know that some of my course will be delivered by a tutor with recent classroom and/or research experience;
- be supported to make the connections between how I can reflect the strategies used in delivering my course in my own practice;
- observe and be observed by peers and more experienced teachers as part of my professional learning and undertake joint lesson observations;
- access coaching and mentoring from peers and more experienced practitioners;
- have additional planned support for professional learning at the key transition points in my teaching career; and
- have a formal link with an HEI throughout my induction year and, if appropriate, beyond.

I have a responsibility to:

- commit to achieving the highest possible professional standards in support of the pupils I teach;
- understand the relevance of the Teacher Professional Learning Framework, which explains the continuity between initial, induction and career-long professional learning;
- develop an understanding of the teacher and leadership competences and their relevance to my work;
- know and understand the importance of and links between internal and external evaluation approaches to individual and whole school quality;
- understand the importance of career-long participation in professional networks and communities of practices to broaden knowledge and improve practice; and
- provide feedback on how initial teacher education courses can be modified and developed for future participants.

As a school leader ...

I will have the opportunity to:

- undertake extended professional learning – which may take the form of additional study or placements in other organisations within or outside the education sector;
- know that I can have increasing autonomy in deciding delivery methods for professional learning when I have demonstrated through the SDP that my school is better placed either alone or collaboratively to provide professional learning opportunities for staff;
- know that there will be identified personnel in the EA who will help match and broker the support I and my school needs;
- initiate collaborative relationships and be supported in developing communities of effective practice within and beyond my school;
- have access to regular update sessions on the inspection process and the implications of any changes; and
- lead my own and/or other schools' professional learning and be allocated resources accordingly where I have demonstrated the capacity to do so.

I have a responsibility to:

- use my knowledge of the teacher competences to plan, participate and lead my own learning and the learning in my school as a research rich self-improving school community;
- be accountable to governors for improved outcomes for pupils as a result of investment in professional learning;
- encourage professional dialogue that is informed by current research and practice to improve the educational outcomes of pupils;
- ensure sufficient time and expertise is allocated for the planning, delivery and evaluation of the impact of professional learning both annually and across the lifespan of the SDP; and
- support my teachers who lead a particular aspect of pedagogy or the curriculum.

As a provider of professional learning or support ...

I will:

- ensure that professional learning I provide is in line with the Department's vision and characteristics;
- provide professional learning that is research informed and has a focus on improving outcomes;
- provide professional learning that builds on and develops the skills articulated in the school curriculum;
- model effective practice in individualised learning;
- provide, where possible, optional accreditation within professional learning opportunities;
- ensure that any training I provide is subject to rigorous quality assurance;
- provide training that is underpinned by the teacher and leader competences;
- ensure training is delivered by research active practitioners;
- work with schools and teachers in the review and development of professional learning programmes;
- support teachers/schools that want to collaborate in communities of practice;
- support schools to be at the centre of professional learning practice at all levels;
- contribute to the development of a framework of professional learning;
- develop collaboration and sharing of best practice with stakeholders to build capacity;
- ensure that lesson observation and evaluation skills are integral to each stage of development of 'next' practice; and
- ensure professional learning has agreed weightings between academic achievement and practical skills/competences.

Section 5

Implementation

- 5.1** This Strategy will be implemented over a number of years through annual Action Plans.
- 5.2** The education budget already provides very significant investment in teacher professional learning to support employers in carrying out their responsibilities and to help develop teachers and school leaders.
- 5.3** In a challenging financial climate, the priority will be to make more effective use of the resources already invested in teacher professional learning, including those delegated directly to schools. We will evaluate rigorously the professional learning that schools and ALCs provide to ensure that they develop, plan and prioritise collaboratively to ensure best value and maximum impact.
- 5.4** A key element of the Strategy will be working collaboratively in professional learning communities to share best practice. We know that this is already happening in a range of settings, including ALCs, individual school communities, principal groups and TeachMeet. However, the Teachers' Voice Survey in 2010⁸ highlighted the issue of a lack of time for professional learning opportunities as being a significant obstacle. We will, therefore, work with stakeholders to identify and develop where possible more flexible low cost and cost-neutral ways of supporting collaborative work.
- 5.5** All professional learning providers supported or funded by the Department will be required to demonstrate how their professional learning opportunities are aligned with, or have begun to align with, the vision and characteristics identified in this Strategy.

⁸ http://www.gtcni.org.uk//index.cfm/area/information/page/teachers_Voice

Implementation phases

- 5.6** The actions identified in this Strategy will be delivered through three interrelated phases:

1. Defining and Developing

Building capacity through collaborative practice

2. Expanding

Creating coherence

3. Embedding

Supporting a self-sustaining system of professional learning

Phase 1: Defining and developing – building capacity through collaborative practice

- 5.7** The first phase will be focused on defining and developing the actions that result from this Strategy. Drawing on a wide range of reciprocal skills, a more self-sustaining system of professional learning will be developed. Teacher tutors, teacher educators and support services to schools can all have a significant role with student and beginning teacher, for example:

- schools can assist HEIs to provide more customised support for student and beginning teachers;
- in turn, HEIs can assist schools in developing the action research skills of their teachers in helping them become reflective practitioners; and
- stakeholders can positively influence how the EA develops and delivers its support services.

Phase 2: Expanding – creating coherence

- 5.8** In the second phase, as we seek to consolidate coherence in the system, the revised competences should begin to permeate all levels of professional learning. There should be enough cross-fertilisation of ideas and pedagogy to allow more seamless transition through each stage of professional learning.

There should also be verifiable evidence that professional learning at each stage has been shaped by the vision and characteristics of this Strategy.

- 5.9** As ‘next’ practice is established, effective coaching and mentoring skills should be used more widely at every stage of professional learning. The EA will identify the best use of human and time resources to support professional learning needs. Their focus will be on brokering and co-ordinating professional learning for a school or group of schools. Professional learning coordinators and/or professional practice experts will support the work.

Phase 3: Embedding – supporting a self-sustaining system of professional learning

- 5.10** The third phase will involve supporting a self-sustaining system of professional learning that includes review and forward planning for the next stage of development.

Next steps

- 5.11** Actions for the first year are set out in the Action Plan published alongside this Strategy. Actions will be prioritised and taken forward as resources allow.

Section 6

Conclusion

- 6.1 In realising the vision of **Learning Leaders** the Department aims to build into teacher professional learning the coherence identified as necessary by the OECD 2013 Report. This will involve focusing on continuity, consistency and consolidation of approaches in all of the phases of teacher professional learning.
- 6.2 We will place schools and teachers at the centre of professional learning and provide a coherent and flexible framework that is career-long and based on collaboration and best practice. This will enhance teacher and leadership competence and capacity to meet the needs and aspirations of all pupils through high-quality teaching and learning.
- 6.3 Engaging with key stakeholders has enabled us to begin mapping out the future direction for teacher professional learning. We have set out what we want teaching and leadership to look like in 2025 and outlined the steps that can be taken to begin moving towards that goal.
- 6.4 We can draw on many examples of existing good practice within the current system. The proposals in this Strategy will require new and existing partnerships throughout the education system to implement the actions.
- 6.5 The vision for professional learning should lead to teachers and leaders feeling more in control of shaping and developing their learning. In moving towards a self-sustaining system of professional learning, ultimately the teaching profession will set the standards to which it will hold itself accountable.
- 6.6 We are committed to engaging in dialogue on collaborative approaches to capacity building that are clearly understood and which add value to pupil and teacher learning.
- 6.7 The development of a professional learning framework will ensure that every child has access to high-quality teaching every day taking us closer to delivering the vision for teacher professional learning:

‘Every teacher is a learning leader, accomplished in working collaboratively with all partners in the interests of children and young people.’

Glossary of Terms

ALC	Area Learning Community
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
Department	Department of Education
Framework	Teacher Professional Learning Framework
EA	Education Authority
EPD	Early Professional Development (the two years following induction)
ESaGS	Every School a Good School – the Department’s policy for school improvement
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
GTCNI	General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDP	School Development Plan
Teacher Professional Learning	A collective term agreed with stakeholders that refers to the current phases of initial, induction and continuing professional development for teachers.

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Action Plan – Year One

- 1 The Teacher Professional Learning Strategy identifies five key areas where change can have a positive impact on pupils' educational outcomes. These are:



- 2 Our Action Plan for the first year is set out on the next page. Developing and implementing the actions will depend on available funding and Departmental priorities.
- 3 In identifying key partners helping to implement the actions, we acknowledge that other key partners will also be involved.
- 4 The Action Plan will be evaluated to inform future actions.

ACTION	POLICY COMMITMENT	LEAD PARTNER(S)
Review, develop and consult on revised competences.	1, 10	GTCNI
Establish oversight group for design of teacher professional learning framework.	1, 13	DE
Consult with stakeholders at design stage on Framework based on revised competences and other professional/international models.	1, 13	EA/GTCNI/ETI
Set up advisory groups of stakeholders/practitioners to inform ongoing development of new support arrangements that reflect the vision and characteristics of the Strategy.	13, 15	EA
Identify and evaluate current best practice in continuing teacher professional learning and make recommendations for further development linked to vision and characteristics of the Strategy.	4, 6	ETI
Develop proposals on how existing practice can be used and expanded within the Framework using recommendations from the ETI evaluation (above) to set up structures to develop and sustain professional learning communities.	1, 4, 6	EA
Develop work already ongoing in the Belfast area on building peer networks at a range of levels.	1, 5	ETI/EA
Use recommendations from ETI evaluation to develop proposals for pathfinder projects aligned to the Department's vision and characteristics of teacher professional learning focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coaching/mentoring; • building leadership capacity; and • teaching/leading in schools in challenging circumstances. 	3, 4, 10, 12	EA
Deliver update sessions and online resources for school leaders on inspection process and the impact of changes to it.	10	ETI
Consult on priorities for teacher professional learning.	13	EA
Review time and resources allocated to teacher professional learning.	2	DE
Review ITE content following ETI evaluation.	4, 6, 9	DE
Review, refine and update Action Plan for Year Two.	15	DE

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